79. Desirability of metalling the lower portions of the Western Outlet road, of putting the bridges, &c., in order, of abandoning the upper portion and cutting a deviation from near Mankulam estate to join the present Northern Outlet road near Kanniamala estate.

Mr. J. S. B. Wallace (Member, Kannan Devan Planters' Association) submitted that the Western Outlet road was cut at great expense by Government as an outlet road for the North Travancore Hills, but, owing to the bad state of repair in which it was kept, it had been practically of no use except for hauling timber in the lower sections. The lower portion of the road had not been completely metalled and bridges were often unsafe for traffic. The top portion of the road had not been metalled at all and owing to the nature of the country it traversed, the road, even if metalled, would be unfit for traffic for about 6 months of the year, on account of the very heavy rainfall and the numerous slips which occurred in the rainy season. He requested that, to avoid the steep zigs on the top portion of the road and the annually recurring repairs to buildings and drains, a deviation might be cut from the 45th mile, from Kothamangalam to join the present Northern Outlet road at Kanniamala factory, and that the whole road from Kothamangalam upwards might be completely metalled and all bridges put in order, to enable the road being used at all times of the year. He added that a trace had already been cut by Messrs. James Findlay & Co. of the suggested deviation from the 45th mile to the Kanniamala factory and the whole of that section could be cut at a gradient of 1 foot in 20 feet the distance being 9½ miles.

80. District roads and the Kottayam-Kumili road.

Mr. J. H. Cantlay (Member, Central Travancore Planters' Association) said that he was informed by the Executive Engineer that the total grant for the 70 miles of the Kottayam-Kumili road was Rs. 56,000 for the current year, of which Rs. 30,000 was to be spent in re-metalling ⅙ of the whole at a cost of Rs. 2,500 per mile, leaving a balance of Rs. 26,500 only for the ordinary maintenance of 58 miles. He doubted whether the latter amount was adequate to keep the road in good order not only for carts but also for motor traffic.

The Member then represented the urgent necessity of metalling the road between Kumili and Chothupara which was badly in need of repair and said that, unless the road was metalled before the rains, it would become quite impassable for traffic. As regards the grant-in-aid roads, the Member asked Government whether, if they were to take up the repair of bridges, the timber required would be granted to them free of cost. The Member said in conclusion that he had nothing further to bring up as he understood that the Dewan had kindly promised to go into the matters relating to grant-in-aid roads with the Road Committee during his visit to the District in March 1921.

The Dewan gave the following joint reply to the above 5 representations.

Dewan's reply.—In reply to Mr. Cantlay's enquiry about the Kottayam-Kumili road, the Chief Engineer says that the maintenance grant for the road was till the end of 1095 Rs. 45,900 and that it has since been raised to Rs. 56,500. A portion of this grant will be utilised for re-metalling a portion of the road every year. The Chief Engineer thinks that the remaining portion of the grant would be sufficient for maintaining, in good condition, the portions of the road not taken up for re-metalling. Mr. Cantlay's reference to certain portions of the road being bad is, no doubt, correct. We are spending Rs. 800 per mile on this road, but the traffic on the road is so heavy, especially the traffic of motor buses and motor lorries, that it deteriorates quickly. The expenditure of more and more money on this road is a matter of serious concern to Government. I am considering how to increase the revenue from this road. I think it is only fair to get a greater return from these motor lorries and buses for the maintenance of the road.

Mr. Vincent.—There is already a toll.

Dewan.—It is that toll that I want to tap more in order to finance the road better. As regards the portion of the road between Chothupara and Kumili, it was re-metalled in 1091. It is not proposed to re-metal it this year. Re-metalling

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is done once in six years and the turn for re-metalling it will come next year. Some portions have been taken up earlier owing to heavy traffic. The other portion will not be overlooked and will be taken up next year, when its turn comes.

With regard to the Western Outlet road, two estimates were submitted by the Chief Engineer to Government some time ago. I have not yet sanctioned these estimates, because I want to satisfy myself about this road. I am likely to visit it this month or the next, and I shall then decide whether we should spend more money on it, for there is some difference of opinion in regard to the utility of this road and the possibility of maintaining it. I know we have already spent over 9 lakhs of rupees for making the road cartable, and it will be the aim of Government to improve the road and keep it fit, if at all it is possible to do so.

The question of roads in the Planting District is a difficult one. Government are aware of the importance of improving the existing roads and of making fresh roads in the District. They will do good to both the Government and to the people. Government are thankful to the planters for the roads they have made so far at their own cost, and for handing them over to Government free of cost and also for making continuation roads. The improvement of communications in the Planting District involves not only more money but also an improvement in administration. The taluks of Devicolam and Peermade are so far away from the headquarters of responsible P. W. D. officers that these officers are handicapped to a certain extent, and the question of having a responsible local officer who can look to the local needs promptly and consult local opinion as to what is important and what is unimportant is engaging the attention of Government. Added to this, I should like to gain more personal experience of the condition of affairs in that part of the country and also to confer with the planters and people who have got interests at stake and, then, with the help of the Chief Engineer and with the help of the local non-official public, I should like to come to some decision in regard to the policy to be pursued. I shall do this as early as possible.

VI. PUBLIC HEALTH.

Municipal Councils and Medical Relief.

(1) Municipal Councils.

81. Grievances of the public owing to heavy taxation in the Nagercoil Municipality.

Mr. P. Kesava Perumal (Member, Nominated) said that the scavenging fees and house tax imposed by the municipality were too heavy to be borne by the people. Though it was an established fact that municipal taxes were intended to be utilised towards securing health and sanitation, it was also necessary to ascertain whether the people were in a position to pay the heavy taxes imposed on them. The duty of the Municipality and the Government consisted not in imposing heavy taxes on the people but taxing them lightly and conferring proportionate benefits on them. The Nagercoil Municipality failed to do this, and this was evidenced by the large number of notices served and attachments made and the innumerable representations of the people protesting against the imposition. The scavenging fees and house tax now imposed were too heavy on the people. The Member, therefore, requested that reasonable reductions be made in the rates of taxes levied by the Municipality in proportion to the capacity of the people to pay and the system rendered feasible and easily workable. One point to be considered was, he said, to see if the citizens derived benefits commensurate with the taxes paid by them. The large surplus now in the hands of the Municipality was itself a sure indication of the heaviness of the taxation and the disproportionate use made of it in securing the comfort and convenience of the people. The amount budgetted for the new Municipal Office building was likely to be heavily exceeded when it came to completion. It was indeed a great grievance, if that large surplus wrung from the poor people was left to be used for purposes other than securing their comfort and convenience. In view of these facts, the Member prayed for orders to the Municipality to remove the complaints above set forth.

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